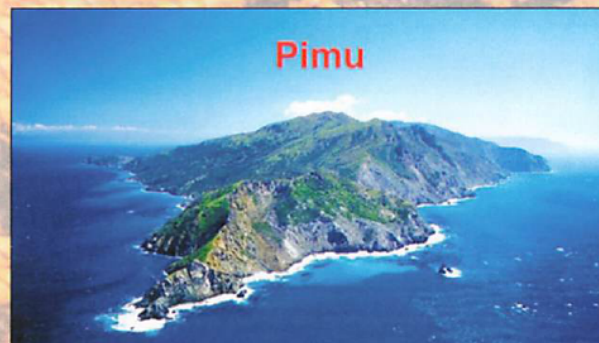


Chief Ernie P. Salas

The Gabrieleño were first known by the Spanish as Kichireños "people of the willow houses" they were the people who canoed out to greet Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo upon his arrival off the shores of Santa Catalina and San Pedro in 1542. Cabrillo declined their invitation to come ashore and visit. Their original name Kizh (pronounced keech) having been lost through assimilation into Spanish culture, they came to be called Gabrieleño because of their forced labor with the San Gabriel Mission . They STILL inhabit all of Los Angeles County , as well as parts of Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange County. There were an estimated 5,000 in the region when the first Spanish settlers arrived in 1771. There are over 100 prominent known sites that are Gabrieleño villages, each having had as many as 400 to 500 kizh huts. Hereditary chieftains who wielded almost total authority over the community led the villages. Today academia continues to desecrate our true name, culture and history by promoting the misnomer of Tongva.

The Tribe has a beautiful culture and a rich heritage. Archaeologists have found and excavated thousands of sites throughout the territory for over a 100 years. The artifacts they found include small sculptures of whales and dolphins, "pelican stones," beautiful polished bowls of steatite and sandstone inlaid with shell bead decorations and sacred special artifacts that archaeologist call "cogstones" and "discoidals". Other artifacts include abalone shell fishhooks and chipped stone points and arrowheads. There were also ground stone bowls (mortars) and pestles, and millingstones (that archaeologists call metates and manos). With rare exceptions, perishable artifacts such as baskets were not preserved on archaeological sites. Basket making was a high art form in indigenous Indian California and the Kizh baskets were no exception. Their designs were elegant and striking as can be seen today in the very few examples that have survived.



Ancient Kizh people used their utilitarian artifacts to hunt, fish and collect plant foods as they had a "hunting and gathering culture." The men would hunt deer, antelope and rabbits on land and on the sea they would fish for sea bass, tuna, swordfish and sea mammals. They would also collect abalone, mussel and clam shell fish. The women would use special conical collection baskets to gather a variety of plant foods such as wild cherry,



blackberry, yucca and chia. In the fall they would harvest the acorn crop for acorns were the "staff of life" for the Tribe. In ancient times they originated the procedure to cleanse the acorns of its tannic acid which would make them inedible. Once cleansed, they cooked the ground meal into a fine meal of mush.

The Kizh loved festivals and sacred events where they would worship their "Great Spirit" Quaorar, the benevolent sun father deity Tamit and the Earth Mother Chukit. They would worship at special sacred sites such as at Jucjaungna (aka Burro Flats) where they created monuments to the solstices: a "sun dagger" with pictographs (cave paintings) to mark the winter solstice and a summer solstice monument that was marked with a pointer shadow cast by a special boulder onto a "Bear Paw" pattern of mortar holes. Shamans (religious leaders) would teach children by story telling around their camp fires of their legends. They included their origin story: "The world was at one time in a state of chaos, until the Great Spirit gave it its present formation: fixing it upon the shoulders of seven giants, made expressly for this end. They have their names, and when they move themselves, an earthquake is the consequence." Other legends included "How Coyote placed the sun" and how the first tribal people became the living pine trees of "Hidakupa" (the San Gabriel Mountains).

In order to communicate between our Sea World and our Land World, our ancestors invented a true planked canoe. No other native culture or civilization in the New World invented such an advanced canoe. With it our people carried on an extensive trade in such items as steatite (soapstone) from quarries on Catalina Island, sea otter pelts, mother of pearl shell from abalone and other shells for beads and ornaments. They traded those items to the mainland both to our Kizh people

and to other tribes as far to the east as the Hopi of Arizona and the Taos of New Mexico.

The cultural accomplishments of our ancestors have prompted major anthropologists to describe us as follows: "The Gabrieleno . . . seem to have been the most advanced Indian tribe south of Techachapi except perhaps the Chumash. They certainly were the wealthiest and most thoughtful. . . and they dominated them civilization-ally wherever contacts occurred" (Kroeber 1925, 621). ". . . the Gabrieleno were the wealthiest, most populous, and most powerful ethnic nationality in aboriginal southern California. . ." (Bean and Smith 1978, 538). ". . . the Gabrieleno are revealed. . . as a people of material wealth and cultural sophistication. . . They maintained a maritime trade network." (MacCually 1996).

Our ancestors and their outstanding Kizh Culture lived in harmony with the landscape and seascape for thousands of years. That ended with the invasion of the Spanish Empire. In 1771 it established a "mission" in our territory at what is now called, "Whittier Narrows" (15 miles east of downtown Los Angeles). After it was flooded out, it was rebuilt in the present city of San Gabriel. The Spanish Empire was ruthless and brutal in its conquest and occupation of our tribal lands. They enslaved us and forced us to build and maintain the missions. Their onslaught decimated our people and all but destroyed all aspects of our culture. That ordeal episode of our history is documented in our Tribe's first publication of its own book. Its about our heroine who rose up to fight for our freedom and dignity. Our book is entitled, "Toypurina, the Joan of Arc of California."



Presently there are plans to raise a bronze statue of her in the City of San Gabriel where her revolt took place. Toypurina is the only Native American Woman in American History who ever led a revolt against invading powers.



Sculptor Rick Hill



Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians, Kizh Nation
P. O. Box 393 Covina, CA 91723
Email: gabrieleñoindians@yahoo.com
(626) 926-4131
Website: gabrieleñoindians.net
Brochure design: Tim Poyorena-Miguel

Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians, Kizh Nation



Historically known as
The San Gabriel Band of
Mission Indians recognized
by the State of California as
the original tribe of the
Los Angeles basin.